

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MANAMA 00887 01 OF 02 011123Z

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03

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TRSE-00 OMB-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 NEAE-00 /077 W

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2331

INFO COMIDEASTFOR IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK IMMEDIATE

CNO WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAMA 0887

S.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : MARR, BA

SUBJECT : MIDDLE EAST FORCE STATUS

REF : (A) MANAMA 0884

(B) MANAMA 0879

SUMMARY: GOB'S APPARENTLY RIGID DETERMINATION TO HAVE THE MIDDLE EAST FORCE OUT BY 1977 REPRESENTS A "POLITICAL SETBACK" FOR BAHRAINI LEADERSHIP, WHO FEEL FORCED TO BOW TO ANTI-MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESSURES. IN OUR REACTION WE MUST BE CAREFUL TO AVOID TURNING THIS INTO POLITICAL HUMILIATION FOR USG. POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR REACTING ARE OUTLINED BELOW: THERE ARE NO REAL OPTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. REFTELS INDICATE RIGIDITY GOB'S INSISTENCE THAT IT NOTIFY USG IN WRITING OF ITS DECISION TO TERMINATE U.S. NAVY PRESENCE BY JUNE 30, 1977. IN CONSIDERING HOW WE REACT, WE MUST REALIZE THAT IF THIS DECISION IS A "POLITICAL SETBACK", AS STATE 174770 SUGGEST, IT IS A SETBACK ESSENTIALLY FOR THE AL KHALIFA LEADERSHIP WHICH HAS BEEN FORCED BY LOCAL AND AREA

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SECRET

PAGE 02 MANAMA 00887 01 OF 02 011123Z

PRESSURE TO COMPROMISE ON ITS STATED INTENT TO KEEP THE U.S.

NAVY IN BAHRAIN AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. IN THAT CONTEXT GOB OBVIOUSLY FEELS, HOWEVER INACCURATELY, THAT IT IS DOING AS WELL BY US AS IT POSSIBLY CAN BY PERMITTING MIDDLE EAST FORCE TO REMAIN FOR ALMOST FOUR YEARS AFTER OCTOBER 1973 TERMINATION NOTICE. DESPERATELY WANTING TO GET THIS ISSUE OFF ITS BACK, IT CORRECTLY SUSPECTS THAT ANY IMPRECISION OR FLEXIBILITY OF LANGUAGE IN NOTIFYING US OF THIS DECISION WILL OPEN THE DOOR TO LATER UNCOMFORTABLE U.S. PRESSURE.

2. SINCE TRANSMITTING REF A, WE HAVE RECONSIDERED WHAT POSSIBLE PLOYS MIGHT BE OPEN TO US IN SEEKING TO MAINTAIN SOME FLEXIBILITY (I CANNOT STRESS TOO STRONGLY THAT THIS IS ESSENTIALLY A THEORETICAL EXERCISE SINCE THE HARD POLITICAL REALITY IS THAT GOB WILL HAVE MIDDLE EAST FORCE OUT BY MID-1977 UNLESS THE LOCAL AND AREA SITUATION CHANGES IN SOME UNFORESEEN AND UNLIKELY MANNER). IN CONSIDERING THESE APPROACHES, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE PONDER REALISTICALLY JUST HOW MUCH CONTINUED U.S. NAVY PRESENCE OPERATING OUT OF BAHRAIN WOULD BE IN OUR INTEREST AFTER MID-1977 GIVEN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. FACED WITH ITS OWN "POLITICAL SETBACK", THE GOB IS OF COURSE LOOKING TO US TO ACCEPT ITS DECISION GRACEFULLY. WE SHOULD AVOID REACTING IN A MANNER WHICH MIGHT TURN BAHRAIN'S "SETBACK" INTO OUR OWN POLITICAL HUMILIATION.

3. WE CAN VISUALIZE FIVE POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR REACTING TO GOB DECISION (THERE ARE NO REAL OPTIONS):

A. LOW KEY TEMPORIZING. I COULD, UNDER INSTRUCTIONS, REITERATE THE ARGUMENT THAT NO WRITTEN NOTIFICATION OF GOB'S DECISION IS NECESSARY, THAT WE ARE APPROPRIATELY INFORMED OF 1977 PLANNING DATE AND THAT THERE IS NOTHING FURTHER TO DISCUSS AT THIS TIME WHILE WE REVIEW SITUATION. THIS, OF COURSE, IS ESSENTIALLY WHAT I HAVE BEEN DOING TO SEVERAL KEY OFFICIALS SINCE WE FIRST WERE INFORMED OF 1977 DATE. IT IS NOT WORKING AND, IN MY VIEW, CONTINUING THIS APPROACH WILL NOT FORESTALL GOB'S WRITTEN NOTIFICATION. IT WILL INTENSIFY GOB'S DETERMINATION TO GET THIS MATTER SET IN CONCRETE.

B. HIGH LEVEL TEMPORIZING. WE COULD TRY THE PLOY OF DELIVERY, NOT LATER THAN AUGUST 3, OF A LETTER TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER FROM THE SECRETARY (OR, ALTERNATIVELY, PERHAPS UNDER SECRETARY SISCO) NOTING THE GOB'S POLICY DECISION RE 1977,

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 MANAMA 00887 01 OF 02 011123Z

REASSURING FOREIGN MINISTER OF OUR ACCEPTANCE IN PRINCIPLE THAT MIDDLE EAST FORCE AGREEMENT IS FOR A LIMITED DURATION AND ASKING GOB TO TAKE NO FURTHER STEPS UNTIL FOREIGN MINISTER HAS HAD A CHANCE DURING UNGA TO TALK WITH SECRETARY (OR UNDER SECRETARY SISCO) ABOUT THIS QUESTION, PARTICULARLY IN THE LIGHT OF BROADER, GLOBAL ISSUES ON WHICH WE WOULD LIKE TO EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER. THIS PLOY MIGHT DELAY THINGS UNTIL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OPENS IN OCTOBER, BUT IS UNLIKELY

TO ALTER GOB'S DECISION. I CANNOT IN GOOD CONSCIENCE
RECOMEND ENGAGINGHPRESTIGE OF THE SECRETARY IN SUCH A MISSION,
PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THE MOOD LIKELY TO PREVAIL AT UNGA
AND THE MANY MORE SERIOUS ISSUES WE WILL FACE THERE.

C. LOW KEY ACQUIESCENCE. THE COURSE I RECOMMEND IS THAT I
BE INSTRUCTED IMMEDIATELY (NOT LATER THAN AUGUST 2 IF IT IS TO
HAVE ANY EFFECT) TO RESPOND TO FOREIGN MINISTER ALONG
FOLLOWING LINES:

(1) USG, WHILE UNDERSTANDING PERFECTLY BAHRAIN'S POSITION,
FRANKLY DOES NOT SEE NEED FOR WRITTEN NOTIFICATION RE 1977
DATE AT THIS TIME;

(2) IN VIEW OF GOB'S DESIRE TO MAKE SUCH WRITTEN NOTIFICATION,
WE HAVE SUGGESTED AN APPROACH WHICH GOB HAS REJECTED;

(3) GOB FULLY ENTITLED TO GIVE US WRITTEN NOTIFICATION IF
IT WISHES. WE CAN MERELY ASK THAT SUCH NOTIFICATION BE WORDED
AS CAREFULLY AS POSSIBLE WITH A VIEW TO MAINTAINING FUTURE
FREEDOM OF ACTION (ALONG LINES I HAVE SUGGEST); AND

(4) WE THUS STAND READY TO RECEIVE SUCH NOTIFICATION IF
GOB INSISTS ON SENDING IT. (COMMENT: IN FOLLOWING THIS
APPROACH WE SHOULD THEN SEEK TO IGNORE THIS ISSUE
FOR AWHILE, LETTING GOB STEW IN ITS OWN JUICE WHILE WAITING
UNTIL EARLY 1976 TO SEE IF THERE IS ANY POSSIBILITY OF ALTERING
GOB DECISION, OR MODIFYING ITS IMPLEMENTATION, SHOULD WE FIND
THIS DESIRABLE. END COMMENT.)

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PAGE 01 MANAMA 00887 02 OF 02 011129Z

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 MANAMA 0887

D. FULL-DRESS BREAST-BEATING. MORE FOR OUR OWN PSYCHIC SATISFACTION THAN FOR ANY GOOD IT WOULD DO, WE COULD SEEK TO ARRANGE A FULL DRESS MEETING WITH THE AMIR AND FOREIGN MINISTER IN WHICH WE EXPRESS, BY COLD AND BITTERLY WORDED AIDE-MEMOIRE, OUR RECOGNITION OF BAHRAIN'S RIGHT TO DO WHAT IT IS DOING, HOWEVER MISGUIDED IT MAY SEEM TO US, AND HOWEVER HARMFUL TO OUR LONG-TERM MUTUAL INTERESTS IN THE STABILITY OF THE REGION. I AM CONVINCED SUCH AN APPROACH WOULD HAVE NO RPT NO EFFECT IN CHANGING GOB DECISION AT PRESENT. IT COULD WELL BE VIEWED BY TOP BAHRAINI LEADERS AS AN ATTEMPT TO BULLY THEM WHEN THEY ARE TRYING TO CONVINCE THEMSELVES THEY ARE DOING ALL THEY CAN FOR US IN A DIFFICULT SITUATION. IF THERE IS ANY FUTURE HOPE OF TURNING AROUND GOB DECISION, SUCH AN APPROACH MIGHT KILL IT. AT BEST, IT WOULD WARN GOB WITH MORE MELODRAMA THAN THE SITUATION WARRANTS THAT OUR LOVE MAY BE GROWING COLD.

E. SEIZING THE INITIATIVE WITH A CLEAN BREAK. IF BEING WARNED BY THE GOB THAT MIDDLE EAST FORCE MUST LEAVE BY 1977 IS POLITICALLY INTOLERABLE TO US, THERE IS A WAY TO SAVE FACE. WE COULD, NOT LATER THAN AUGUST 3, IMPLEMENT ON OUR OWN INITIATIVE TERMINATION CLAUSE OF THE STATIONING AGREEMENT GIVING NOTICE THAT MIDDLE EAST FORCE WILL LEAVE BY AUGUST 3, 1976. I ASSUME SUCH
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 MANAMA 00887 02 OF 02 011129Z

A STEP WOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED IN OUR INTEREST.

4. GIVEN OUR LACK OF OPTIONS AND INCREASING RIGIDITY OF GOB, I RECOMMEND I BE INSTRUCTED IMMEDIATELY TO MAKE APPROACH OUT-LINED SUB-PARA C ABOVE. I WOULD EXPECT TO RECEIVE GOB'S WRITTEN NOTIFICATION ABOUT AUGUST 4, IN ANY EVENT. HAVING RECEIVED IT, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE LAY LOW FOR AWHILE SINCE BAHARNA IN JULY 31 MEETING BEGAN FOR FIRST TIME TO MUTTER ABOUT DESIRABILITY OF OUR ACKNOWLEDGING IN WRITING GOB'S NOTIFICATIO OF 1977 "DEADLINE." I THINK WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE POSITION I DID INFORMALLY JULY 31: THAT USG ACKNOWLEDGEMENT UNNECESSARY UNTIL IT BECOMES TIMELY IN ACCORDANCE WITH TERMS OF STATIONING AGREEMENT FOR ONE PARTY OR THE OTHER TO SERVE TERMINATION NOTICE.
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